

# THE Saturday Magazine.

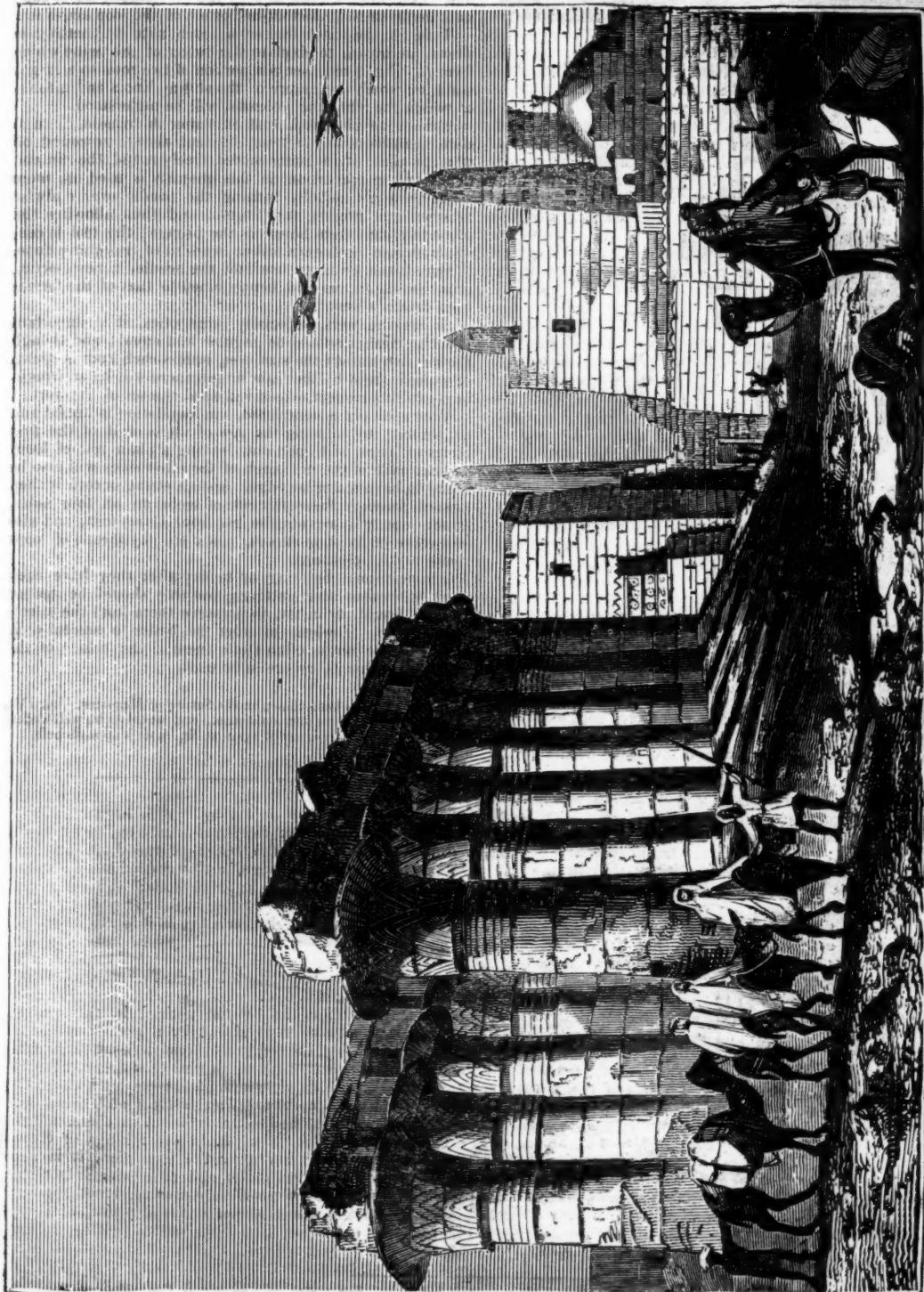
Nº 230. SUPPLEMENT,



JANUARY, 1836.

PRICE  
{ ONE PENNY.

UNDER THE DIRECTION OF THE COMMITTEE OF GENERAL LITERATURE AND EDUCATION  
APPOINTED BY THE SOCIETY FOR PROMOTING CHRISTIAN KNOWLEDGE.



COLONNADE IN THE GREAT TEMPLE AT LUXOR.

## SOME ACCOUNT OF EGYPTIAN THEBES\*.

## PART THE FIRST.

THE object of the present and of a future paper, is to give some account of the most wonderful assemblage of ruins on the face of the earth; for such is the proud and undisputed title which has been justly assigned to the works that still adorn the seat of Egyptian Thebes. That ancient city, celebrated by the first of poets and historians that are now extant: "that venerable city," as Pococke so plainly expresses it, "the date of whose ruin is older than the foundation of most other cities," offers at this day, a picture of desolation and fallen splendour, more complete than can be found elsewhere; and yet "such vast and surprising remains," to continue in the words of the same old traveller, "are still to be seen, of such magnificence and solidity, as may convince any one that beholds them, that without some extraordinary accident, they must have lasted for ever, which seems to have been the intention of the founders of them." But the more palpable attractions of these monuments,—their beauty, their vastness, their colossal grandeur, are not the only causes of the admiration which they have excited among the curious and the learned; they possess an equal merit, in the light which they cast upon the social and political condition of the people who formerly dwelt in the land that contains them. Thebes was among the earliest of the states which existed in Egypt, before that country became moulded into one powerful kingdom; and the removal of the mystery that has so long shrouded it, is an object to which the efforts of the moderns have been particularly directed, as one of great importance, not only in regard to the history of Egypt, but also in regard to the general history of the world. To quote the words of a well-known writer, (Professor Heeren,) "its monuments testify to us of a time when it was the centre of the civilization of the human race; a civilization, it is true, which has not endured, but which, nevertheless, forms one of the steps by which mankind has attained to higher perfection."

From these alone, can we form a just conception of the magnificence of ancient Thebes, or of the degree of civilization to which its people had attained; they give us, indeed, no continuous history, in the strict sense of the word, but as "a living commentary" upon the very meagre written accounts which have come down to us, they afford us a curious insight into the condition of that royal city, such as it existed in the most flourishing days of its prosperity. We may fairly infer, that in proportion as our skill becomes greater in the interpretation of the symbols sculptured upon these monuments, the circle of our knowledge will be enlarged; for much has certainly been already done. The discovery of the system of phonetic hieroglyphics, or hieroglyphics which represent *sounds*, and were thus used to express proper names, has enabled us to read upon the monuments of Egypt, and especially those at Thebes, the greater part of the kings' names contained in the list of the Egyptian priest Manetho, who wrote about 270 years B.C.; and as we know from one of the extracts which are still preserved of his writings, that in the compilation of his history, he made use of "translated copies of the inscriptions upon the obelisks," it is just possible, that some of the monuments on which we have identified these names are the very monuments from which they were originally copied, more than 2000 years ago.

We shall therefore endeavour, in describing the monuments of Thebes, not only to convey to our readers some notion of the powerful impression which the sight of them produces upon the mind of the beholder, but also to point out the more prominent illustrations which they afford, of the history and habits of the ancient Egyptians, as these have been developed by the researches of recent writers. And before we proceed to do this, it is necessary that we should very briefly mention the general results of modern inquiry into the early history of Egypt, as they are agreed upon by the best authorities; because, as our descriptions will carry us up the stream of time, far beyond all ordinary landmarks, it is essential that some others should be had in view, with which the events referred to may be connected.

\* There was another Thebes in the Ancient World, the capital of the Grecian territory of Boeotia; this was a famous city, but its reputation has been eclipsed by the superior renown of its Egyptian namesake.

## EARLY HISTORY OF EGYPT.

At a very early period in the history of the world, there existed in Egypt a system of regal government. What was the state of the country before that system was established, is a point, concerning which we derive little information from that only authentic record of the early condition of the world—the Bible. We learn, simply, that Egypt was peopled by the posterity of Ham, receiving the appellation of *Mizraim*, from one of his sons of that name.

That the first king of Egypt was named Menes, is a point pretty well agreed upon; and the age in which he lived, is considered as the limit of legitimate inquiry into the history of that country. What the date of it is, forms a matter of dispute. Mr. Wilkinson, who has patiently compared the lists of Egyptian monarchs handed down to us by Manetho, with those sculptured in hieroglyphics on the monuments of Thebes and other places, fixes it 2201 years before the Christian era, and 4036 years from the present time.

From the accession of King Menes, till the conquest of Egypt by the Persians, in the year 525, B.C., that is to say, during a period of nearly 1700 years, this country was for the most part governed by independent native sovereigns, of whom it is supposed that, for a considerable time, there were several always reigning contemporaneously in different portions of it. "How many changes," to use the words of Heeren, "might have come to pass in this long period? How many states have arisen and fallen in this long lapse of ages, without history having preserved even the remembrance of their names? How many, indeed, *must* have sprung up and declined, unless we give to their institutions a firmness and durability which is no longer the lot of human things." Few, indeed, are the notices which we possess of the many important events which must have happened in the course of these seventeen centuries;—the most valuable are naturally those which have been fortunately handed down to us in the Sacred Scriptures, such as the journeying of Abraham into Egypt, when a famine prevailed in the land of Canaan, B.C. 1920; the arrival of Joseph, B.C. 1706, in the reign of Osirtesen the First; the birth of Moses, B.C. 1571, in the reign of Ames, supposed to be the "new king" that arose up over Egypt, as we are told in the first chapter of the book of Exodus, "which knew not Joseph," and began to oppress the Israelites, setting "over them taskmasters to afflict them with their burdens," and making "their lives bitter with hard bondage;" the flight of Moses, B.C. 1531, and the exode or departure of the Israelites under his guidance, B.C. 1491; the marriage of Solomon with the daughter of the king of Egypt, B.C. 1014; the invasion of Judea, B.C. 970, by Shishak, as his name is written in the *Chronicles*, or Sheshonk, as it is found sculptured upon existing monuments in hieroglyphics, who came up against Jerusalem "with twelve hundred chariots and threescore thousand horsemen," and "took away the treasures of the house of the Lord and the treasures of the king's house," and "carried away also the shields of gold which Solomon had made;" the defeat and slaying of Josiah, king of Judah, in the valley of Megiddo, B.C. 610, by Pharaoh Neko, or Neco, as it is written in the hieroglyphics; the capture of Sidon by Pharaoh Hophra, B.C. 595, and the subsequent dethronement of that monarch, after he had been unsuccessful against Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, B.C. 570.

The first event of importance noticed by the profane writers, is the invasion of Egypt by a savage race, who overran the whole country and partially subdued it, establishing themselves for a long time in the lower and middle portions. This is the dominion of the shepherd kings, the *Hyksos*, as they were called: the king of Thebes was the chief instrument in driving out these invaders, having entered into an alliance with the other kings of Egypt for that purpose. Soon after the expulsion, it is supposed, that the various states and kingdoms into which the country had been previously divided, became united into one empire, and that the brilliant period of Egyptian history commenced. Heeren dates it between 1500 and 1600 B.C., "at a time," he says, "when we have as yet heard of no great empire in Asia, when as yet Phoenicia possessed no Tyre nor the commerce of the world; when the Jews, after the death of Joshua, remained weak

and inconsiderable; and when the obscure traditions of the Greeks represent that nation as but little removed from barbarism. There can be no doubt, therefore, but Egypt ranked at this time as the most civilized country of the known world, at least, as far as the Indus; and for succeeding centuries no one could enter the lists with her, or cause her any dread; and thus through a long period of tranquillity, she continually increased and prospered till she attained that pitch of greatness which is not only set forth in the narratives of antiquity, but displayed in her own monuments. The first symptoms of decay are discernible towards the beginning of the eighth century before the Christian era, the period at which a little light breaks into her history, and we may therefore conclude with much probability, that this golden period lasted from seven to eight centuries."

The most prosperous period of this "golden age," is that in which Egypt was ruled by the kings of the much-talked of "eighteenth and nineteenth dynasties" of Manetho, or dynasties of Theban monarchs; and it is to this period that we are to refer the greater part of the monuments still existing at Thebes, and, indeed, of all those which belong to what is deemed the age of genuine Egyptian architecture. The first sovereign of these dynasties was Chebron Ames, as Mr. Wilkinson calls him, "the new king which knew not Joseph," of whom we have already spoken; among his successors the most celebrated are several bearing the names of Amenoph, or Amunoph Thoth'mes, or Thutmosis, and Ramses, or Rameses. The third Amenophis who began to reign B.C. 1430, is supposed to be the Memnon of the celebrated vocal statue still standing on the western plain of Thebes; the second Ramses,—Amunmai Ramses as his name is read in the hieroglyphics, and Rafneses Miamum, as Manetho calls him, or as he is now styled, Ramses the Great, was the most renowned monarch that ever ruled over Egypt. He is supposed to be identical with the far-famed Sesostris of the Greek writers; his name is found more frequently on the monuments of Thebes, indeed, of all Egypt, than that of any other king, for there are few remains of any city on which it is not to be seen. The date of his accession is a most important epoch in Egyptian chronology: it is fixed by Heeren and other writers about 1500 B.C. To this great monarch the city of Thebes was indebted for much of its splendour.

The decline of Egyptian greatness commenced with the successful invasion of the Ethiopian king Sabacon, about 800 B.C. The ravages of the Ethiopians were followed by the destructive conquest of the Persian king Cambyses, B.C. 525; the dominion of Persia was upheld, though with difficulty, till B.C. 332, when it was supplanted by the rule of Alexander the Great, and his successors the famous Ptolemies; but these, in their turn, gave way before the rising strength and ambition of the Romans, by whom the ancient kingdom of the Pharaohs was degraded into an obedient province thirty years before the Christian era.

#### ORIGIN AND RISE OF ANCIENT THEBES.

To fix the precise period in which Thebes was founded, is, of course, impossible, though the fact of its high antiquity is abundantly proved. We have remarked that the state of Thebes was among the earliest which existed before that country became one kingdom: the city of Thebes was, of course, its capital and centre, and like other cities of similar character, it thus acquired two names, the one sacred, given to it by the priests, and derived from their protecting deity; the other profane, and adopted from one of those accidental causes which usually determine the common appellation of cities. The first of these names was *Amunei*, or "abode of Ammon," which the Greeks rendered by *Diospolis*, "city of Zeus" or *Jupiter*,—the Ammon of the Egyptian mythology being, in their estimation, equivalent to the Zeus of their own, and the Jupiter of the Roman gods. To this "Diospolis" was affixed the epithet of "great," to distinguish it from a smaller *Diospolis* in a different part of Egypt. The second, or profane, name, by which the city was known among the mass of the people, was the Coptic word *Tapé*, which in the Memphitic dialect is pronounced *Thaba*: this the older Greek writers rendered accurately enough, by their *Thebai*; whence the modern Thebes. According to Champollion, *Tapé* was not a proper name, but had the signification, in the Egyptian language, of "head" or "chief," and was thus very naturally applied by the people to their capital and seat of government,

ecclesiastical as well as civil. In the same manner, *Amun*, (the Greek Ammon,) the root of the sacred name of the city, expressed the idea of "glory," "loftiness," or "sublimity;" and being used as the title of the principal deity, was fitly employed to designate the place of his especial abode.

#### ITS "HUNDRED GATES."

THE earliest writer who mentions Thebes is Homer, who flourished near the close of the tenth century before the Christian era; and, from the language of the poet, it would appear, that in his time the fame of this ancient city had spread abroad into distant countries, as that of one famous in the highest degree for opulence and warlike strength. Moreover, were it not for the license which we know that poets are apt to assume, we might carry back the date of that reputation two centuries further, that is to say, to the period in which the scenes of the *Iliad* are supposed to have taken place. For when Agamemnon sends messengers to Achilles, to induce him to lay aside his "direful wrath," and again exert his prowess on behalf of the suffering Greeks against the dreaded Hector, the hero scornfully rejects the proposal of reconciliation, and proudly declares that nothing should ever more lead him to co-operate with the "king of men," not even his proffered gifts, nor all his wealth "twice ten times told;"—

....., nor all the gold  
That the Egyptian Thebes' vast treasures hold;  
Thebes, where thro' each her hundred portals wide,  
Two hundred charioteers their coursers guide.

The "hundred gates" here mentioned were a stumbling-block to the commentators in the days of Diodorus; and they have been the source of endless dispute and conjecture among the moderns. Thebes is not known to have ever been surrounded with a rampart, and if it had been, some traces of the work must have been visible at the present day; but, as Pococke remarks, "there are no signs of walls round it, nor were walled towns common in Egypt. And as there are," he continues, "remains of such fine gates about their temples, it might be thought that these might give occasion, as Diodorus observes, for the observation of the poet's; but as he mentions that two hundred chariots could be sent out of them with armed men, this may be thought not to agree so well with the gates of the temples, unless we suppose that they joined in some solemn acts of religion before they went out to war; others, however, think that they might be rather so many palaces of princes, or great men of the city, who could each of them, on any exigency, send out so many chariots to the war; and this interpretation seems to be countenanced by the poet, who, immediately after he has mentioned the great wealth of their houses, speaks of their hundred gates, and of the chariots and men that could be sent out of them." Yet the general opinion of the moderns is in favour of the suggestion which, as Diodorus tells us, was supported by some persons in his day, "that the city had not a hundred gates, but many propylæ to the temples, from which it is called *hecatompylon*, (or hundred-gated) in the sense of many-gated." Another conjecture has been started,—that the hundred gates in question, were the outlets of the great rectangular enclosure, whose traces are to be still plainly seen in Western Thebes, and which is supposed to have been used as a place of review for the mustering and manoeuvring of armies. The French writers have objected that there are only fifty outlets to this enclosure instead of a hundred; but, to say nothing of the license of a poet, the same objection might apply to the other conjecture, as it would be equally difficult to point out a hundred propylæ. If, however, as Heeren remarks, we admit, that before any great expeditions the army assembled within the circus, and from its gates issued forth, the poet's description appears justified. As to the real power of Thebes, Diodorus tells us, after quoting the lines of Homer, that "in truth, 20,000 chariots did go out from it to the wars," but he is rather confused in the passage.

#### ITS SITUATION.

THEBES was built on the banks of the Nile; in the narrow valley of Upper Egypt there is hardly room for any extensive city to stand without approaching very close to the edge of the river. Its locality is represented as admirably adapted for the foundation of a large capital. The receding of the mountain chains of Lybia and Arabia on both sides of the Nile, allows the narrow strip which

usually lines its banks, to expand into a comparatively spacious plain, stretching nearly nine miles in width from east to west, and about an equal distance from north to south. The ancient city stood in this plain, and the ruins existing at the present day, are in both the eastern and western portions of it: the western portion is the smaller of the two, and it contains a greater number of monuments, though none finer, than are to be found in the other. From this circumstance, we infer that the principal part of the city, that is to say, the part most inhabited, lay on the eastern side of the river; because on that side all the great buildings were erected near the water, and thus the rest of the plain, as far as the Arabian mountains, was left vacant for private dwellings; whereas, on the western bank, the whole plain was almost covered with monuments, even to the very foot of the Lybian mountains, and so could have afforded but little space for the houses of individuals.

It is not known that the two divisions of the city were ever connected by any bridge. "A people," remarks Heeren, "whose knowledge of architecture had not attained to the formation of arches, could hardly have constructed a bridge over a river, the breadth of which would even now oppose great obstacles to such an undertaking. We have reason to believe, however, that the Egyptians were acquainted with the formation of the arch, and did employ it on many occasions: Belzoni contends that such was the case, and asserts that there is now at Thebes a genuine specimen, which establishes the truth of his assertion. No question exists, it should be observed, that arches are to be found in Thebes; it is their antiquity alone which has been doubted. The testimony of Mr. Wilkinson on this point is decisive in their favour. He tells us he had long been persuaded that most of the innumerable vaults and arches to be seen at Thebes were of an early date, although unfortunately, from their not having the names of any of the kings inscribed on them, he was unable to prove the fact; when at last, chance threw in his way a tomb vaulted in the usual manner, and with an arched door-way, "the whole stuccoed, and bearing on every part of it, the fresco paintings and name of Amunoph the First," who ascended the throne 1550 years B.C.

We thus learn that the arch was in use in Egypt nearly 3400 years ago,—or more than 1200 years before the period usually assigned as the date of its introduction among the Greeks. As to the circumstance of its not being applied by the Egyptians to the construction of a bridge across the Nile, a sufficient reason for that, in the opinion of many, is to be found in the natural difficulties which must oppose every such undertaking; the river itself, besides being deep and annually subject to a great overflowing, is nearly a mile in breadth.

It is by no means certain, however, that there was not a bridge across the Nile at Thebes;—indeed, some of the sculptures which have been discovered of late years on the outside of one of its large edifices, are by some supposed to prove very distinctly that there was one. An Egyptian monarch is represented approaching a river which is shown to be the Nile by the crocodiles, and peculiar kinds of fish depicted in it: he is returning with a train of captives from a foreign war, and accordingly on the opposite side of the river is seen a concourse of priests and distinguished men, coming forth to greet his arrival. The river,—upon which we look down with the usual bird's-eye view,—is interrupted in the middle of its course by a broad band stretching across from bank to bank: this is apparently intended to represent a bridge; but as the view is of such a kind as to let us see no part whatsoever of the elevation of the structure, we are unable to say whether, supposing it to be really a fixed bridge, it was constructed with arches or simple beams. It is evidently to this bridge that the king is advancing; and we see at its foot, upon either side, something which may be taken for a gateway,—perhaps the usual entrance into the town across the stream. The chief point of doubt is, whether the town into which the bridge leads is really meant for Thebes. Mr. Wilkinson considers it probable, but yet by no means certain that it is so. Mr. Burton has given a copy in lithograph, of this curious piece of sculpture, in the thirty-seventh plate of his *Excerpta Hieroglyphica*; it was he and another gentleman—Mr. Hay—who first discovered it.

#### ITS EXTENT AND INTERNAL ARRANGEMENT.

It is said that the ancient Thebes once covered the whole of the plain of which we have spoken, as extending on

either side of the Nile, nine miles in length, and nine miles in breadth. From the geographer, Strabo, we learn distinctly that it was at least 80 stadia, or about 9½ English miles in length. Diodorus mentions that, at an early period it had a circuit equivalent to about sixteen of our miles; and if such were its size at that early period of its history, what must it have been after the additions which took place under succeeding monarchs? According to Mr. Wilkinson, traces of the former extent of the city are to be found at the present day for a length of 5½ miles, and a breadth of three miles. The eastern portion was, as we have already remarked, the larger; and it seems to have been peculiarly entitled to the appellation of Thebes or Diospolis. The western portion was called the Lybian suburb. It included the quarter of the Memnonia, and the whole of its extensive Necropolis, or "City of the Dead."

The private dwellings in this ancient city are contrasted strikingly with its public edifices. They were, indeed, comparatively of a mean character; for in individuals, an "unnecessary prodigality and worldly display of riches, were censured as the offspring of arrogance and impiety." Of course we can have no remains of any of them existing at the present day; yet Mr. Wilkinson tells us that he has some elevation-plans, if he may so call them, from the tombs, which enable him to lay down the ground-plan of the houses very satisfactorily. They were built of crude brick, stuccoed within and without, and consisted frequently of a ground floor and upper story: a terrace on the summits was converted into a cool retreat by the aid of a sort of wooden shed, with a sloping roof, opening in the direction of the wind so as to catch the passing breeze, and conduct it downwards. Sometimes the interior was laid out in a series of chambers enclosing a square court, in the centre of which stood a tree or fort,—something in the same fashion, perhaps, as is observed in the arrangement of the houses of the modern Persians\*. Many were surrounded by an extensive garden, with a large reservoir for the purpose of irrigation; "lotus flowers floated on the surface, rows of trees shaded its banks, and the proprietor, and his friends amused themselves then by angling, or by an excursion in a light boat, towed by his servants." Those dwellings which pretended to the character of mansions, had even large propylæ, or gateways, such as belonged properly to the temples, and also false obelisks, (as we learn from the tombs,) painted so as to imitate granite; and in these the court-yard was surrounded by a strong brick wall, with a row of battlements or spikes ranged along its summit, and furnished with two or more doors, on some part of which the name of the occupant was frequently inscribed. The garden generally contained a vineyard which was an important object of care. It was watered from the reservoir by the pole and bucket, in use at the present day, or by pails filled from a tank, and carried by a yoke on men's shoulders, "exactly similar to that used by our milkmen."

It is not probable that the houses were laid out upon this extensive scale in the more crowded part of the city,—the interior portions of Diospolis Proper, on the east bank, for instance; nor is it certain that in the very early times, cultivated spots of land were admitted amongst the houses, at all. But we learn clearly from the sculptures on the tombs that the principal inhabitants did at some time possess extensive gardens attached to their mansions, independent of the villas, parks, and farms, which they possessed for their recreation without the city; and we have written documents in existence of the second century B.C., which show us that parcels of land were then let and sold within the interior of the western portion of the city,—the Lybian suburb, as it is called. These are some of the celebrated manuscripts of papyrus which have excited so much attention since the commencement of the present century, and which have afforded us so valuable a help in the study of hieroglyphics. They are among the oldest specimens of pen-and-ink writing that exist; and are justly regarded as invaluable, not only by antiquaries, but by all who feel an interest in the records of a past age. An Egyptian deed of conveyance, 2000 years old, effecting the transfer of a plot of ground within the circuit of the ancient royal city of Thebes, would certainly be a curiosity in any shape; the following specimen is very perfect, and will, in all probability, afford some interest to our readers. We give the translation of the late Dr. Young, merely omitting some of the titles in the opening part.

\* See Saturday Magazine, Vol. V., p. 164.

## ANCIENT CONTRACTS FOR THE SALE OF LAND IN THEBES.

"In the reign of Cleopatra and Ptolemy her son, surnamed Alexander, the gods Philometores Soteres, in the year XII, otherwise IX; in the priesthood, &c., &c., on the 29th of the month Tybi: Apollonius being president of the Exchange of the Memnonians, and of the lower government of the Pathyritic Nome.

"There was sold by Pamonthes, aged about 45, of middle size, dark complexion, and handsome figure, bald, round-faced, and straight-nosed; and by Snachomnemus, aged about 20, of middle size, sallow complexion, likewise round-faced, and straight-nosed; and by Semmuthis Persinei, aged about 22, of middle size, sallow complexion, round-faced, flat-nosed, and of quiet demeanour; and by Tathly Persinei, aged about 30, of middle size, sallow complexion, round face, and straight nose, with their principal, Pamonthes, a party in the sale; the four being of the children of Petepsais, of the leather-cutters of the Memnonia; out of the piece of level ground which belongs to them in the southern part of the Memnonia, eight thousand cubits of open field; one-fourth of the whole, bounded on the south by the Royal Street; on the north and east by the land of Pamonthes and Boconsiemis, who is his brother,—and the common land of the city; on the west by the house of Tages, the son of Chalome: a canal running through the middle, leading from the river: these are the neighbours on all sides. It was bought by Nechutes the Less, the son of Asos, aged about 40, of middle size, sallow complexion, cheerful countenance, long face, and straight nose, with a scar upon the middle of his forehead; for 601 pieces of brass: the sellers standing as brokers, and as securities for the validity of the sale. It was accepted by Nechutes the purchaser."

"APOLLONIUS. Pr. Exch."

Attached to this deed is a registry, dated according to the day of the month and year in which it was effected, "at the table in Hermopolis, at which Dionysius presides over the 20th department;" and briefly recapitulating the particulars of the sale, as recorded in the account of the partners receiving the duties on sales, of which Heraclides is the subscribing clerk, "so that even in the days of the Ptolemies there was a tax on the transfer of landed property, and the produce of it was farmed out, in this case to certain partners."

According to Champollion, the date of this contract, corresponds to the 13th or 14th of February, 105 B.C., and that of the registry to the 6th or the 14th of May in the same year. Dr. Young fixes it in the year 106 B.C.

The contract is written in Greek; it is usually called the "Contract of Ptolemais," or the "Papyrus of M. d'Anastasy," having been first procured by a gentleman of that name, the Swedish Consul at Alexandria. Three other deeds of a similar kind, but rather older, and written in the *enchorial*, or *demotic*\* character, were brought from Thebes, about fifteen years ago, by a countryman of our own, Mr. G. F. Grey, the same gentleman who was fortunate enough to bring that Greek papyrus which turned out, by a most marvellous coincidence, to be a copy of an Egyptian manuscript which Dr. Young was at the very time trying to decipher. These three deeds are in the *enchorial* character, and accompanied with a registry in Greek; they all relate to the transfer of land "at the southern end of Diospolis the Great," as the Greek registries have it. The Greek papyrus, two of which we just spoke, and the original Paris manuscript, of which it is a copy, are instruments for the transfer of the rent of certain tombs "in the Lybian suburb of Thebes, in the Memnonia," and a/c of the proceeds arising from the performance of certain "liturgies" on the account of the deceased. They have been invaluable aids in the study of ancient Egyptian literature.

## ITS SPLENDOUR, DECLINE, AND RUIN.

BESIDES the knowledge which we have of its great extent, we possess some interesting notices of the splendour which distinguished ancient Thebes. The successors of the king, whom Diodorus speaks of as its founder, added greatly to its size and magnificence, "so that," as his English translator expresses it, "there was no city under the sun so adorned with so many and stately monuments of gold, silver, and ivory, and multitudes of colossi and obelisks cut out of one entire stone." There were four

temples, we learn also, "for beauty and greatness to be admired." The oldest of these was about  $1\frac{1}{2}$  miles in circuit, 67 feet high, and had walls 24 feet in breadth. "In accordance with this magnificence, was the display of ornaments, which were either wonderful for their costliness, or the exquisite workmanship which had been bestowed on them by the labour of hands." Rameses the Great, or Sesostris, was one of the monarchs to whom Thebes is most indebted; he built the vast structure, whose remains are known to this day by the appellation of the Memnonium, or "Tomb of Osymandyas;" he made additions to the temple at Karnak, and erected the gateway and beautiful obelisks in front of the great edifice at Luxor. The magnificent remains which are still found on the site of this great capital, are alone sufficient to enable us to form a vivid conception of its surpassing grandeur in the days of its glory; and they naturally lead us to exclaim with Heeren, "What a splendid scene must have forced itself on the vision of the wanderer, who, emerging from the desert, after having toiled up the steep Lybian mountain-chain, suddenly beheld the fruitful valley of the Nile, with its numerous towns, and in its centre, royal Thebes, with her temples, colossi, and obelisks!"

The Persian Conquest (B.C. 525,) is the era to which it is customary to refer the principal devastation of Thebes,—a devastation which has unquestionably been caused by the hand of man, and which has given rise to the remark, "that the labour of the destroyer must have been almost as great as that of the builders of these enormous temples." For some time before the Persian invasion, it is supposed that Thebes must have been declining, in consequence of the removal of the seat of government to Memphis, and we know that it had suffered greatly from the Ethiopian conquest of Sabacos, nearly three hundred years before; yet it is certain, as Mr. Wilkinson observes, that at no time did private individuals possess greater opulence than in the early part of the sixth century before the Christian era, if we may judge from the tombs then excavated and sculptured, which certainly exhibit the marks of a labour and expenditure exceeding what was bestowed upon those of any other age. Cambyses, the Persian king, has acquired the reputation of a merciless barbarian, who destroyed, as far as he was able, all the splendid memorials which he could lay his hands upon, of Egypt's former greatness. He pillaged the temples "of their gold and silver, and of their abundance of ivory and precious stones," and is said to have carried off these treasures to expend them upon royal buildings at Susa and Persepolis; he is charged too with burning some of the temples or the city; and, as a proof of its extreme opulence, it is alleged that, after the fire, there were gathered together "from the rubbish and cinders," as the translator of Diodorus familiarly expresses it, more than 300 talents of gold, and 2300 talents of silver, or 26,020 lbs. of the former metal,—equivalent to 1,248,960L, and 199,518 lbs. of the latter,—equivalent to 598,554L.

When Alexander the Great conquered Egypt, he laboured, in some degree, towards the restoration of Thebes; under him the sanctuaries of Karnak and Luxor were rebuilt. His successors, the Ptolemies, did little, perhaps nothing, in the way of repairing the injuries of former times; and towards the conclusion of the period of their dominion, Thebes suffered perhaps more severely than ever it had done before; for in the reign of Ptolemy Lathyrus, who ascended the throne 86 years B.C., this ancient city rebelled, and suffered a siege of three years; being then taken, it was plundered, and exposed to a terrible devastation. Upon its next change of masters it enjoyed a respite; indeed, the Romans made some restorations among the buildings of Thebes. Yet such had been the effects of the dreadful calamities it had undergone, that in the age of Augustus, when Rome was rising from a "city of brick" into a "city of marble," the once mighty capital of the Pharaohs was "inhabited by villages," to use the forcible expression of the geographer, Strabo. We have little reason to suppose, that when Egypt formed a part of the eastern empire, its former capital was at all raised from its fallen condition; and we have, unfortunately, but too much reason to conclude, that under the dominion of the Arabian Caliphs, it sank yet deeper into desolation, and the destruction of its monuments was continued still by the same agency which had all along worked their ruin, the hand of man. Though we have no distinct account of the injuries inflicted on it in this period, we may infer their extent, and the motives which operated to produce

\* See Saturday Magazine, Vol. II., p. 64.

them, from the following remarks of Abdallatif, an Arabian physician of Bagdad, who wrote a description of Egypt in the fourteenth century. He tells us, that formerly the sovereigns watched with care over the preservation of the ancient monuments remaining in Egypt; "but, in our time," he adds, "the bridle has been unloosed from men, and no one takes the trouble to restrain their caprices, each being left to conduct himself as to him should seem best. When they have perceived monuments of colossal grandeur, the aspect of those monuments has inspired them with terror; they have conceived foolish and false ideas of the nature of these remains of antiquity. Every thing which had the appearance of design, has been in their eyes but a signal of hidden treasure; they have not been able to see an aperture in a mountain, without imagining it to be a road leading to some repository of riches; a colossal statue has been to them, but the guardian of the wealth deposited at its feet, and the implacable avenger of all attempts upon the security of his store. Accordingly, they have had recourse to all sorts of artifice to destroy and pull down these statues; they have mutilated the figures, as if they hoped by such means to attain their object, and feared that a more open attack would bring ruin upon themselves: they have made openings, and dug holes in the stones, not doubting them to be so many strong coffers filled with immense sums: and they have pierced deep, too, in the clefts of mountains, like robbers penetrating into houses by every way but the doors, and seizing eagerly any opportunity which they think known only to themselves."

This is the secret of much of the devastation which has been worked among the monuments of ancient Egypt.

#### VILLAGES OF MODERN THEBES.

It does not appear, that in the long line of ages which have witnessed the desolation of ancient Thebes, its site has at any time become absolutely deserted; on the contrary, it would seem that some sparks of existence have been kept constantly alive in the shelter of small scattered villages, such as occupied its surface in the days of Strabo, and such as are still to be found encumbering it, in our own. The position of these modern villages has been determined by that of the chief groups of monuments; for the half-savage people who inhabit them, have been but too eager to supply the deficiency of their own art, by the labour of their skilful predecessors, and to raise up their paltry mud huts, within the walls, and upon the very roofs, of temples and palaces, which were erected thousands of years ago. "In every part of Egypt," says the Rev. Mr. Jowett, in his interesting *Christian Researches*, "we find the towns built in this manner upon the ruins, or rather the rubbish of the former habitations. The expression in Jeremiah xxx. 18, literally applies to Egypt in, the very meanest sense, *The city shall be builded upon her own heap*: and the expression in Job xv. 28, might be illustrated by many of these deserted hovels. *He dwelleth in desolate cities, and in houses which no man inhabiteth, which are ready to become heaps.* Still more touching is the allusion in Job iv. 19; where the perishing generations of men are fitly compared to habitations of the frailest materials, built upon the heap of similar dwelling-places, now reduced to rubbish. *How much less in them that dwell in houses of clay, whose foundation is in the dust!*"

The principal villages, or rather groups of habitations which now occupy the site of ancient Thebes, are Luxor and Karnak, on the eastern bank of the river, that is to say, on the ground once occupied by Diospolis Proper; and Goornoo, and Medeenet Haboo, on the western bank—the "Lybian suburb" of a former age. There are some characteristic points of distinction between the monuments on the two sides of the river; the eastern bank is remarkable for its obelisks and avenues of sphinxes; while the wonders of the western bank, are its tombs and its colossal statues. But both possess palaces and temples, (or whatever else they should be called,) splendid specimens alike of gigantic architecture, and equally remarkable for the sculptures which adorn them. The palm of antiquity, however, must be awarded to one of that group which is found upon the eastern bank; the great temple of Karnak—which is thought to be that "oldest temple" mentioned by Diodorus, and is, indeed, generally identified with that famous "temple of Ammon," which existed at Thebes; contains portions nearly 4000 years old.

#### THE VILLAGE OF LUXOR.

LUXOR occupies the principal place among the villages of modern Thebes; indeed, it holds the rank of a market-town in the geography of the country, poor and miserable as it is. It is, moreover, the residence of a Cashef, or Turkish governor, and the head-quarters of a troop of Turkish cavalry. The name is written in various ways—Luxor, Luqsoor, El Uqsoor, and El Qosoor, and other forms; all these are variations of an ancient plural of the word *Qasr*, signifying a palace, country-seat, pavilion, or any large mansion. Thus, the meaning of the appellation Luxor, is "the palaces;" and not as some writers, and among them, even Mr. Hamilton have rendered it "the ruins;" Burckhardt expressly guards us against that interpretation. According to Mr. Wilkinson, the town has also the name of *Abou l Haggag*, from the name of the Mohammedan Sheik, who is worshipped there; the ancient Egyptians, he adds, called it *Southern Tapé*.

The houses of Luxor are built with sun-burnt bricks, or lumps of mud, and baked clay pipes; about three or four feet from the top, branches of trees are inserted, either to bind the structure, or to accommodate the pigeons, which flock to the town in myriads, and perching on these branches, add to the curious appearance of the place. The walls are battlemented, and in the port-holes are piled up pipes of clay, which at a distance, have the appearance of small cannon. On the very top of the parapet, circular pots are placed, which also viewed from afar, looked like so many men's heads; "so that when I first discovered the town," remarks Mrs. Lushington, "it seemed to me, that all its inhabitants had mounted the roofs to see us. It was remarkable to see the miserable mud huts of the moderns built on some of the magnificent pillars of the ancient city." Captain W. F. Head, one of the latest visitors, speaks of the Arab houses surrounding the eastern end of the ruins, as having the appearance of connected forts; "they look formidable at a distance, but lose much of this respectable character upon a nearer approach."

The pigeons of Luxor are very carefully preserved, though they belong to no particular proprietors. An English traveller happened to kill one of them by way of sport, and he was very severely maltreated by the inhabitants of the village. As might naturally be inferred, the traveller who visits Luxor must not expect to find much accommodation for his personal wants; his best chance of securing some degree of comfort lies in carrying his tent with him, and pitching it on one of the convenient spots which are to be found among the ruins. What sort of a dwelling he is likely to procure if he trusts to the mud-huts of the Arabs, may be learnt from the statement of one of our countrymen, who had been obligingly provided with a lodging by a French artist, then resident at Thebes, M. Rifaud. On his arrival, he found his destined abode to be a rude mud hovel, under the very walls of an old temple; it had an upper chamber in ruinous condition, the floor in parts fallen through, the thatch not weatherproof, and neither door, lattice, or window-shutter. "Our Indian servant consulted the safety of our necks by bringing up some planks to place over a hole in the floor. They were painted; a black ground, with figures and hieroglyphics in bright yellow—*mummy chests, broken up and sold for firewood.* There being a large heap in the yard bought for a piastre, and our cook was feeding his fire with the once sacred sycamore."

Mrs. Belzoni, who accompanied her husband in one of his journeys to Thebes, gives a very unfavourable account of the accommodation which she enjoyed during her stay at Luxor. "Mr. B.," she says, "had but just time to put me in a house where he was informed there was a room on the top for me; he was then obliged to sail to Esne to secure the boat," (to carry down the colossal head.) "This was the first time I had ever been left alone with the Arabs, without an interpreter or an European, with about twenty Arab words in my mouth. What they denominated a room, consisted of four walls open to the sky, full of dates put to dry in the sun, an oven in one corner, a water-jar, and a fire-place of three bricks for a pot to stand on, without a chimney,—and this place not to myself, as it was the apartment of the women. I never in my life felt so isolated and miserable, in a violent fever, exposed to the burning sun; besides the torment to have all the women of the village coming out of curiosity to see me."

Within the last two or three years the accommodation for travellers has been somewhat improved; the French, ic

removing the obelisks at Luxor, took down several Arab huts, and erected a tolerable house in their stead.

#### ITS INHABITANTS.

LUXOR, like the rest of Thebes and its neighbourhood, and, indeed, like the whole of Egypt, is inhabited partly by Copts, who are Christians, and partly by Mohammedan Arabs; the latter are the more numerous. When Dr. Richardson visited Egypt, (in 1818,) there were about one hundred Coptic families in this village, and about five times as many Mussulmans, "who live in small huts about twelve feet square, among vermin, dust, and filth, the usual comforts of the Moslems in Egypt. These wretches," he adds, "neither enjoy themselves, nor permit others to enjoy the sweets of a tranquil and social life." The men are employed to a considerable extent in grubbing among the ruins in search of relics, for which the demand has, of course, become more extensive since the "Tour to Egypt." When a traveller arrives, they soon beset him and offer the produce of their labour; but it is seldom worth purchasing, for the most valuable articles that are discovered, are sent to a better market at Alexandria. Besides, these people do not display much discrimination in the collections which they make; fragments of modern china are sometimes handed to the curious traveller when he is eagerly hoping to grasp a scarabaeus or a precious roll of papyrus. Some one, indeed, tells us of an old broken corkscrew which had been left behind by visitors of a civilized cast, being found by an inquisitive Arab, and shown by its joyful possessor as a prize evidently of great value in his own eyes, and in those of his companions.

The degraded condition of these miserable *fellahs*, as the Arab labourers are called, is unhappily too deep to leave us much hope of their redemption for some time to come. We know, indeed, that, of late years, and under the sway of her present ruler, some parts of Egypt have been forced into a little apparent conformity with the civilization of modern times; but his efforts seem to have been confined to those districts which are more immediately connected with his European instructors, and scarcely to have extended to the comparatively remote region of the upper country. There the misery of the people still continues unabated; or if it has undergone some mitigation, they have to thank their predecessors of three thousand years ago, who had skill enough to leave behind them such durable monuments of their labour, as in ages so long after could attract the presence of some civilized beings. There are several incidental notices in Belzoni's narrative, of the oppression which the people in this part of Egypt are in the habit of enduring; and where they are subjected to such treatment, it would be too much to expect them to become civilized.

Mrs. Belzoni, in her remarks upon the women of this district, affords us a curious little specimen of the civilization which they have attained. Some meat was brought to the house in which she lived for her use, but she declined it on account of a fever: the women proceeded to dress it, and from her apartment, Mrs. Belzoni saw "the daughter-in-law with the meat between her teeth,—one hand holding it out, and the other, with a bad knife, cutting, or rather tearing it up till she made it small enough to her mind." We shall not have much difficulty in understanding how she "considered it very lucky she was not hungry or inclined to eat." She experienced, however, much kind treatment from these females, "Mohammedans as well as Christians;"—"there was not a day," is her remark, "I was not visited by the women of Luxor, Karnak, and other villages near."

#### CHRISTIANITY IN MODERN THEBES.

ABOUT sixteen years ago, the villages of Thebes, in common with the rest of Upper Egypt, were visited by the Rev. Mr. Jowett, who communicated the result of his inquiries in the first series of his *Christian Researches*. From him we derive many interesting notices of the state of Christianity in that district, and of the existence of some feeble fragments of the ancient church, which there flourished so extensively in the early ages of our religion. The only one of the villages at Thebes in which he found any Christians, was Luxor; Karnak had none, Goornoo had none, and Medeenet-Haboo was in ruins and deserted; but at Luxor, as he says, "the Christians are numerous. I visited their chief several

times; his name is Mällem Jacob. At his door, disputes were settling with some noise while we sat within. There are about 100 Christian families; they have three priests, two of whom were present. Their church is in the hills, more than an hour's ride off, and is also the church to a village adjacent, called Zenia, where there are almost 40 Christian families. Two days before I came, I had sent word over the river that I should probably sell one Bible to the Mällem: he told his children of it, who can read; one was continually saying to him, 'Father, the book is not come yet.' It was evident that much had been made of it in expectation. I was truly sorry that I had no more to spare, as I could have sold several. In the school there were from fifteen to twenty scholars; the master was, as usual, nearly blind; he had, however, copied some Coptic and Arabic on paper, which the boys learnt almost by rote." Soon afterwards, this zealous missionary was visited by one of the priests, who expressed a desire to go with him to England; he had never had any education but what Luxor afforded, and he wished to know why the English travellers spent so much money on the granite statues, and other antiques. Some idea seemed to have crept into his mind, that the English would put them into their churches and worship them: "I took care," says Mr. Jowett, "to explain to him, especially as he had brought a Mohammedan, that we were better Christians."

The monuments of Thebes exhibit clear proofs, that at one time Christianity was more flourishing in their neighbourhood than it now is; in several parts of the ruins there are distinct traces of Christian churches. At Medeenet-Haboo, according to Mr. Wilkinson, "the early Christians converted one of the deserted courts of the great temple into a more orthodox place of worship, by constructing an altar at the east end, and concealing with a coat of mud the idolatrous sculptures of their Pagan ancestors. The size of the church, and the extent of the village, prove that its Christian population was considerable, and require that Thebes must have held a rank among the principal dioceses of the Coptic church." Large gilt crosses, such as were used to ornament the dresses of the priests, have been discovered within the small apartments at the back of this building, and from this circumstance it is conjectured that those chambers were appropriated, by the ministers of the new religion, to their own use.

Mr. Jowett discovered in an obscure part of one of the temples at Karnak, a short but interesting inscription, which also indicated the former existence of Christianity here; it was written on a pillar in small red letters, and appeared to be a list of bishops who had, perhaps, held a council here in former days, and left this simple memorial of it. He has given a fac-simile of it in his *Researches*, with an explanation and translation; there appear to have been originally fourteen names recorded in the list, in the form of the following:—"Abba Senouthius, Bishop," which is the first in the list. Most of them are imperfect, though deficiencies may be easily supplied. "If it should be thought surprising," says Mr. Jowett, "that so many bishops should have left so humble a memorial of their assembling, I can only say that in the Greek convent at Cairo, I observed the public notice of the patriarch's having gone to Patmos in the September preceding, written in the rudest characters with charcoal on the wall."

#### GRANDEUR OF THE RUINS.

THE earliest travellers who visited Thebes, described its wonders with such glowing enthusiasm as to raise the expectations of all who went after them to the very highest pitch. It ordinarily happens in such cases, that some disappointment is the result; yet here it is otherwise,—for each succeeding traveller has always avowed, that the reality has far exceeded his anticipations, and has generally striven to outdo his predecessors in the language of praise. Their collected encomiums would fill a volume. A few selected sentences will best serve to convey some notion of the powerful impression which results from beholding those wonderful works which are the subject of them. The description of the French artist, Denon, who accompanied Napoleon and the "wise men," in their famous Egyptian expedition of science and conquest, is eminently characteristic of the writer in both his individual and his national capacity. His enthusiasm upon Egyptian matters was intense,—so much so, as very often to blind his scholarship as well as his judgment. The "few pages" about Thebes which, as our readers will see, he has so generously given

to Herodotus, would be very acceptable if any one could find them. The following is his description.

"On turning the point of a chain of mountains which forms a promontory, we saw at once the seat of the ancient Thebes, unfolded in its full extent,—that city of which the magnitude has been pictured to us by Homer in one single word, *hundred-gated*,—a poetical and unmeaning phrase which is still repeated with confidence after the lapse of so many ages. Described in a few pages, dictated to Herodotus by Egyptian priests, and copied by succeeding authors,—renowned for a number of kings, whose wisdom has placed them in the rank of gods,—for laws which have been revered without ever being known,—for sciences confided to proud and enigmatical inscriptions, wise and primitive monuments of the arts which time has respected,—this sanctuary, abandoned, isolated through barbarism, and restored to the desert from which it had been won,—this city always enveloped in that veil of mystery by which even colossi are magnified,—this remote city of which the fancy has but caught a glimpse through the obscurity of time, was still a vision so gigantic for our imaginations, that at the sight of its scattered ruins, the army halted of its own accord, and the soldiers with one spontaneous movement clapped their hands, as if to occupy the relics of this capital had been the aim of its glorious labours, and the completion of the conquest of Egypt!"

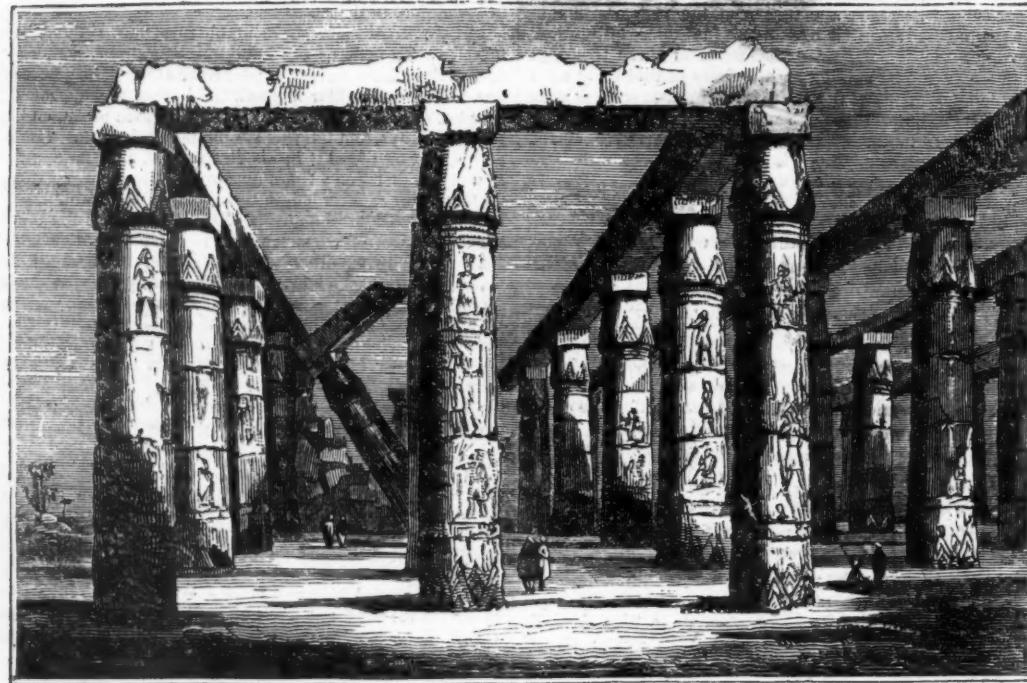
One of our countrymen who visited Thebes many years after Denon,—Dr. Richardson—tells us, that as he approached it in the night, he could not judge of the awful grandeur of that first appearance which so powerfully affected the enthusiastic Frenchman. "But the next morning's sun convinced us," he says, "that the ruins can scarcely be seen from the river; that nowhere does the traveller turn the corner of the mountain to come in sight of them; and that he must be near them, or among them, before he can discover anything." Yet both Denon's drawings, and the more recent ones of Captain W. F. Head, give some distant views of the ruins, which are very effective.

We have in a former number\*, when lightly touching on the subject of Thebes, transcribed the remarks of Belzoni upon his first view of the monuments. Champollion describes his impressions vividly. "The name of Thebes," he says, "was beforehand great in my thoughts;—it has become colossal since I have traversed the ruins of the old capital,—the eldest of the cities of the world: through four whole days I have been running from wonder to wonder. Yet still," he adds, "Thebes is to me but a mass of columns, obelisks, and colossi; the scattered limbs of the monster must be examined one by one, before it is possible to convey a precise notion of it. Patience then," addressing his correspondent, "till I shall pitch my tents in the peristyle of the palace of the Rameses!" Mr. Carne speaks to the same effect:—"It is difficult to describe the noble and stupendous ruins of Thebes. Beyond all others, they give you the idea of a ruined, yet imperishable city; so vast is their extent that you wander a long time confused and perplexed, and discover at every step some new object of interest."

We will close our extracts with a very pertinent remark of the Arabian physician Abd-allatif, and one which has the advantage of being some hundred years older than any other we have quoted. He applied it to the monuments of Lower Egypt,—we may apply it to those of Thebes with equal justice. "A man of good sense," he says, "on seeing these remains of antiquity, is tempted to excuse that error of the vulgar, which supposes that the men of these remote ages lived much longer than those of our time; that they were of gigantic stature, or at least that they exercised dominion over stones by touching them with a wand, and so caused them obediently to transport themselves wherever they were ordered."

Our Engravings afford illustrations of portions of the ruins on the eastern bank of the river. That in page 41 is a view of the Great Colonnade in the Great Temple, or Palace, at Luxor; page 42 exhibits a view of the Grand Hall at Karnak.

\* See *Saturday Magazine*, Vol. IV., p. 154.



RUINS OF THE TEMPLE OF KARNAK.